

Charles L. Lege House
533 West Elmira Street
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3172

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PHOTOGRAPH

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CHARLES L. LEGE HOUSE

HABS No. TX-3172

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Location: 533 West Elmira Street, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.
Present Owner: Ramon Galindo.
Present Occupant: Tenants.
Present Use: Tenant occupation.
Significance: The house is a good representative example of the style of residential building erected in San Antonio during the 1850s.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1855.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: From circa 1855 to 1868, Charles Lege resided in the house on the property belonging to Samuel A. Maverick. On January 10, 1868 Lege purchased the house from Maverick. The property was described in the deed as "a certain lot or block of land within the corporate limits of the city of San Antonio being situated on the east side of Flores Street and is more specially described as follows, viz:" Being bounded on the west or southwest by the Main city ditch leading from the San Pedro Creek, on the east or northeast by the property of Melchoir Amacher, on the south or southeast by Sixth Street which street divides the property herein sold from that sold by me to August Zalmanzig, and on the north or northwest by Seventh Street. The land herein sold being 140 varas in length from Sixth to Seventh Street and runs with Sixth Street 73 varas and with Seventh Street 67 varas from the ditch to the said Amacher's property." The purchase price was \$1,000.

Soon after the purchase, Lege decided to sell the house. Two obligations were executed. First, he used the property as security for a promissory note to Martin Muench, a prominent German citizen in San Antonio, for the sum of \$1,000 plus interest. Second, by acceptance of certain government vouchers from Muench for collection, Lege agreed to pay Muench for \$3,000 within the year. Lege further granted Muench the power of attorney to sell the house and property for not less than the sum of 5,000 "full Spanish or Mexican dollars." On March 6, 1868, Lege sold the property to Muench for the consideration of the two above obligations plus \$500 in gold.

The owners of the house in chronological order are as follows:

1868	Charles L. Lege
1868-71	Martin Muench
1871	I. F. Harris
1871	W. H. Harris
1871-89	Frank Simmang and Gerhard Gabwiler
1889-93	T. G. Garza
1893-1944	Charles Albidress and Arcadio Garza
1944-68	Ramon Galindo

4. Original plans and construction: In 1854 Charles Lege signed an agreement with Samuel Hall to have a house erected. In this agreement the property owned by Lege was described, and it was identified as property immediately opposite the site of the house here under examination. The description of this house varies somewhat from that of the present house but there are similarities.

The following is the contract:

"Articles of Agreement made on this the 25th day of December A.D. 1854 between Samuel Hall of the City of San Antonio . . . and Charles L. Lege of the same place . . . The said Samuel Hall (covenants with Lege) . . . that . . . Hall . . . shall . . . before the first day of July now next ensuing, in consideration of the sum of Twenty five Hundred Dollars, to be paid to him at the time and in the manner hereinafter mentioned, build and completely finish upon ground belonging to the said Charles L. Lege, to wit: upon a certain Lot situated on the West margin of Flores Street in the City of San Antonio which is bounded as follows: on the South by property of S. G. Newton and Gregoria Martinez; on the West by property of Jose Casciano and David Rupe; on the North by property of E. Delgado . . . A dwelling house of hard Limestone rock of the dimensions and description following, to wit:

The said Dwelling house to cover an area of 46 feet square and to comprise four rooms with entries and galleries as hereinafter described: - The foundation walls for the whole house up to the surface of the ground, as well for the outside walls, as the inner division walls, except only the foundation for the front gallery to be made of solid hard rock, of the width of two feet, and down to where the black ground ends and to where a solid and good white or other ground is found, irrespective of depth; the foundation walls for the front gallery to be twenty inches wide and two feet below the surface of the ground; - All the said foundation walls, as before mentioned to be constructed same size and quality (of hard rock) from the Surface of the ground to the height of two feet

and one half above the surface. The walls thence going up except the four inner division walls, which are to be 12" thick, to be 18" thick, and of a height sufficient to give for the two front rooms of entry, between flooring and sealing [sic], - when finished a height of 11', and for the two rear rooms and the gallery between, a height between flooring and sealing [sic] when finished of 9'; - the front gallery to extend the whole width of the house 45', and to be 10' wide; - the two front rooms to be 16' x 18' in the clear, and containing between them an entry 8' x 18' in the clear; - the two rear rooms to be 12' x 14' in the clear and containing between them a gallery 12' x 13-1/2' in the clear; - the roof to be made of good sheeting and good Cypress, and generally to be made of sufficiently strong and substantial material, and so as not to leak in any part; - the Sealing to cover the whole house including the two galleries and entry to be well and substantially constructed of lathing and plastering, and to have two surface coats of plastering; each of the front rooms to have a chimney constructed in the middle of the outside walls respectively, each to be made of solid and large stones with good large hewn stone hearths: the northwestern room to have a chimney at its northwestern corner, to be made of the same material and in the same manner, except that it is to be built upon a foundation wall, and to be raised to 2' above the level of the floor. - The two front rooms to have 3 windows each, two fronting upon the gallery, and one in the outer wall of each room, between the chimney and the gallery, each of said windows to be _____ [sic] in width and _____ [sic] in height, and the panes of glass to be _____ [sic] by _____ [sic] inches; the two rear rooms to have two windows each, one each in the western walls of each of said rooms, and one each in the outer walls of each of said rooms, each of said windows to be _____ [sic] in width and _____ [sic] in height, and the panes of glass to be _____ [sic] by _____ [sic] inches; - the woodwork of all of said windows to be of white pine or New Orleans Cypress lumber; the casings to be of heavy lumber thoroughly seasoned, and to be equal in material and workmanship to those lately made for and put into a new house built by Davis Ruff, on the North side of Obraje Street. The entry to have a large glass folding door, leading into the entry from the front gallery, and lights on each side and above, with panel shutters for the side lights; - the side door and all the windows before mentioned to have strong and well made venetian blinds; - also at the further extremity of the entry, leading into the back gallery, a folding panel door is to be constructed, with lights above, to correspond in size with the door first above mentioned, and one door leading from the entry into each of the front rooms

and one door leading from each of the front rooms into each of the rear rooms respectively, also one door leading from the back gallery into each of the rear rooms respectively, all of said six last mentioned doors to be _____ [sic] in width and _____ [sic] in height, and to be strong and well finished panel doors; - the flooring throughout the entire house, to be of thoroughly seasoned Florida Pine Lumber, one inch thick, of well tongued and grooved of the planks not to be over said inches wide: - all the joists, the floor, sealing (sic), etc. and the rafters to be laid close and of sufficient size; - the front gallery to have four columns or posts to be strong and handsomely made with neat caps, and also a railing all round it, and to have a flight of hewn stone steps in front, to have not more than 8" rise and not less than 12" step, each stone end to correspond with the large front door leading into the entry; - the said four rooms and entry to have a six inch wash board all round, with a moulding on the top; - each of the chimneys in the front rooms to have a neat and handsomely finished mantelpiece and the roof all round the house to have good strong and well made moulded cornice; of the windows and doors to fit close, so as not to admit of any draught, but not too tight; - All the house to be plastered with two surface coats of plastering (the material for which must be of the very best quality sand, limestone, hair) and whitewashed or painted with plain water colors if wished by the said Charles L. Lege: and all the mason work above the surface to be made with lime and sand mortar; - all the locks, hinges, etc. are to be of good and serviceable quality and to be furnished by said Hall; - and the said Samuel Hall for himself, his heirs executors, and administrators doth hereby covenant to and with the said Charles L. Lege, his executors, administrators, assigns, that the said Samuel Hall, heirs, executors, administrators shall construct or cause to be constructed the said dwelling house in accordance with the above description; in good and workmanlike manner to the satisfaction of the said Charles L. Lege, and also shall and will provide good, proper, and sufficient stone, lumber, sheeting, shingles, lathing, sash and other materials of all kinds whatsoever for erecting and finishing the said building . . .

Charles L. Lege doth covenant with Samuel Hall etc. to pay Hall \$400 one day after the signing, sealing and delivery of these present, further that he will within 20 days after completion of the dwelling deliver to Hall 'Deeds with covenants of general warranty' for three tracts and parcels of Real Estate plus \$250 in cash . . . The words 'one forth,' 'handsome,' 'with a gate between the two middle columns,' 'equal to that on the roof of the house of Jacob Linn's opposite the Courthouse,' 'all

the doors, windows, blinds, wash boards, to be painted with three coats of good oil paints, the color to be chosen by the said Charles L. Lege, 'as well as outside' stricken out and the words 'neat,' 'above the surface' underlined.

25 December 1854."

In its original form the house appears to have consisted of five rooms and a central hall. The two small rooms projecting on each end facade seem to be later additions, but they were added before 1888 as attested by a Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of that date. The HABS drawing also indicates a rectangular wood structure centered on and adjoining the rear of the building, undoubtedly the kitchen. This outbuilding was removed and the present rear rooms added at a later date.

- B. Historical Context: No historical information is available on the house or Charles Lege.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The house is typical of the 19th century San Antonio architecture and adapts well to hot and humid summer conditions.
2. Condition of fabric: The structure is in fair condition and needs repairs.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The one-story rectangular house measures approximately 49' x 76'. The front west elevation bays number seven.
2. Foundation: Stone in early portions; concrete in additions at rear; stone at north or south projecting side ell.
3. Walls: The thickness, solidity of the walls, and the surface irregularities of the stucco finish indicate that the wall construction is stone for the principal portions of the house. The north ell is of wood frame and its exterior walls are of tongue-and-groove wood siding once painted white. The stucco exterior is painted watermelon pink.
4. Structural system, framing: The original portion has load bearing walls. Its floor, ceilings and roof systems have typical wood joists and rafters. The east lean-to has a concrete floor.
5. Porches: A one-story porch is across the front (west) elevation and the two projecting side ells. Wooden boxed columns with simple classical capital moldings support the low pitched roof. The ceiling is of tongue-and-groove wood and the floor is of concrete slab.

6. Chimneys: Two chimneys have been removed and are capped with an inverted box of sheet metal. The box is 12" high.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Door frames in stone walls have flat trim which is applied to the face of each wall. There is a slight splay in the thickness of the wall. The front door of the original house is a pair of French doors with sidelights and transom. The vertical and horizontal mullions of this project on the exterior only; the sash of the doors and the sidelights have the putty on the interior. There are three additional doorways on the front facade. The one to the left of the central doorway, originally a window opening, now has a modern wood door. Each side ell has a doorway with modern wood doors opening onto the front gallery. Also, the north elevation of the north side ell has a three-panel door with a transom.
 - b. Windows: Windows are framed similar to the doors. There is a horizontal mullion in the original windows between inward opening casements and transoms. The sill is close to the floor. The windows in the ells are double-hung wood sash, 6/6 light.
8. Roof: The roof is hipped with a ridge running with the length of the house; the low-pitch slope is broken at the plate line and flattened somewhat to extend over the porch. It is covered with standing-seam metal sheeting.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: A central hall is flanked in the front by two large rooms. The hall is doubled in width at the rear thus forming a room space and is flanked by two rooms which in turn open onto two additional flanking rooms. Part of the porch has been enclosed on the north to form a room, and six small rooms have been added across the rear.
2. Stairways: Since the house is one-story high, no stairway exists.
3. Flooring: Masonite nailed over wood plans, or wood plank. North line of rooms in the rear lean-to has a concrete floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: In general, plaster. The north portion has narrow shiplap in its middle room and gypsum board in its south room.
5. Doors: Door frames are splayed and completely case the openings in stone walls. Doors are four-panel type in the older portion of the house.
6. Decorative features and trim: Door trim is flat with an applied molding around the outer edge of the trim.

7. Hardware: Some of the door hinges are of two-knuckle type. Locksets are surface mounted on the old doors.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: There are two fireplaces with gas jets near them. The mantels are of wood, extremely simple, with only a few simple moldings used. The chimneys do not rise above the fireplaces, but are back in the plane of the wall.
 - b. Lighting: Modern incandescent fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The long axis of the house runs from north-northwest to south-southeast. For simplicity the north-northwest elevation has been called north, etc. The immediate locality is commercial in land use. An elevated expressway is a block away to the south, and the central business district is about a mile to the southeast. A lawn, a few trees and some neatly-kept planting boxes comprise the landscape.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

San Antonio Herald. Newspaper article, February 16, 1869.

Corner, William, ed. San Antonio de Bexar, A Guide and History.
San Antonio: Banbridge and Corner, 1890

2. Secondary and published sources:

City Surveyor's Book II, page 136 - plat.

Deed records, Bexar County Courthouse, San Antonio, Texas.
R2/57B, N1/197, V1/368, T3/174-175, V2/345, V2/93

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The San Antonio project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in the summer of 1968, and was made possible with funds from HABS and two sponsors, the Bexar County Historical Survey Committee and the San Antonio Conservation Society. Under the direction of James Massey, chief of HABS, the project was carried out by Wesley I. Shank (Iowa State University), project

supervisor, and by student assistant architects, Charles W. Barrow (University of Texas); Les Beilinson (University of Miami); William H. Edwards (University of Illinois); and Larry D. Hermesen (Iowa State University) at the HABS field office in the former Ursuline Convent buildings, San Antonio. John C. Garner, Jr., director of Bexar County Architecture Survey, did the outside work on the written documentaries. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for preparation of transmittal to the Library of Congress. Dewey G. Mears of Austin, Texas took the documentary photographs of the San Antonio structures.